

Clinical Specimens Needed for Outbreak Investigations

General Public Information

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is investigating a potential outbreak, cluster, case of public health importance. Your specimen is essential to identifying the disease causing your illness and will prevent other people from getting the same disease.

What is a clinical specimen?

- A clinical specimen is a human specimen, not food or environmental. Food and environmental samples may also be taken during the investigation, but human specimens are the most important.
- Clinical specimens may include, but are not limited to:
 - Stool (poop)
 - Nose swab
 - Throat swab
 - Blood



Which specimen type should I give?

- Example of specimens may include, but are not limited to:
 - Stool (poop) for stomach illness
 - Throat or nose swabs for respiratory illness
 - Blood for rash illness
- If you suspect a foodborne illness caused by eating outside the home, please collect stool put it in a clean leak-proof container and place the container in a cooler with ice packs. Call the local County Health Department to report the incident and let them know you have a specimen to test.
- For all outbreaks, Area Investigators (AI) will contact affected people to request a specimen



Where do I collect the specimen?

- It depends on the investigation, but a specimen may be collected at:
 - Home
 - School/childcare center
 - Doctor's office
 - County Health Department
- If the specimen is collected at a non-medical site (home, school, or childcare center) place the specimen in a cooler with a frozen ice pack. Call your AI for additional instructions on specimen handling and to make arrangements for specimen transport or shipment to the state laboratory.



What do I need to collect the specimen?

- If asked to collect a specimen at home, school, or childcare center, your AI will give you the supplies you need to collect the specimen.

What if I have questions? Call your AI at _____